

Child Care Visions



Department of Workforce Services
Office of Child Care

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Professional Development Update

We are excited to announce the addition of the new School Age Career Ladder Program! This program recognizes providers who work in school age child care and who complete training specific to working with school age children. If you did not receive a new Professional Development booklet in the mail, contact our office. Please read the booklet to determine if you are eligible. Your new professional development booklet also includes important updates to the Early Childhood Career Ladder Program.

In addition to the new School-Age Career Ladder Program, there is a new program that

is replacing the old Provider Achievement Award Program. The Training and Longevity \$upplement (TL\$) offers a yearly wage supplement for eligible providers. It is based on two criteria only: your years of continuous licensed experience, and your level of Career Ladder certification. Complete information on the (TL\$) can be found in the new Professional Development booklet.

Also, we would like to inform you that there is a new mailing address for submitting your applications. This address is the location of the newly created Child Care Professional Development Institute (CCPDI).

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Vision:

Quality, affordable child care is available to every child in Utah who needs it.

CCPDI is a joint project of the Office of Child Care and Salt Lake Community College. The Institute will process professional development applications and work on other provider professional development projects.

Utah Office of Child Care Annual Report



The 2003 "Office of Child Care, Department of Workforce Services, Annual Report" will soon be available to the public. This report will give you an update on the OCC and the progress that is being made throughout Utah on behalf of our children. If you would like to receive a copy of the report, please call the office at 1-800-622-7390 or e-mail Christi Christian at cchristi@utah.gov. You may also view the report on our website at www.jobs.utah.gov/occ/DataStatistics.

WINTER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

Winter Quality Improvement Grants are being accepted Tuesday, December 16th - Tuesday December 30th

Please remember that your application needs to be in our office by **3:00 PM on December 30th** to be accepted.

We will also be accepting spring Quality Improvement grants April 13th - April 27th, 3:00 PM.

Office of Child Care Advisory Committee

The Office of Child Care has an Advisory Committee and three Sub-Committees. The Advisory Committee was created to counsel and advise the Office of Child Care in fulfilling its vision. These committees are open for participation to any interested party or organization. Interested parties may contact the Office of Child Care to receive full agendas.

Our next scheduled meetings are:
**Wednesday December 10, 2003; January 14,
and February 11, 2004**

The December meeting is scheduled for
Administration North Building
140 East 300 South
Room 211 A & B

Please call the Office of Child Care for the location
of the January and February meetings
Full Advisory Committee Meetings
10:00 AM - Noon

Welcome!

The Office of Child Care (OCC) would like to welcome our newest staff member, **Shalome Orton**. She will be working as an Administrative Secretary with Christi, focusing mainly on the Quality Improvement Grants and supporting the subsidy specialists.

Prior to joining our office in September, Shalome worked for the Office of Recovery Services (ORS) for three years. At ORS, she gained knowledge of several different state agencies, including the Department of Workforce Services.

Shalome has been highly involved in child care for many years. Her family owned a child care center for 10 years where she worked and

became involved in child care issues. Now as a working mother with three children, she feels it is more important than ever for her to be actively involved in child care, and being a part of our office has given her this opportunity. She is excited to be able to draw upon her experience in the child care industry, her knowledge of government agencies, and her personal desire to help improve the affordability, quality, and availability of child care.

Shalome is currently working on a degree in Family and Human Studies. She plans to continue her studies and to become a driving force behind the mission of OCC. Please join us in welcoming Shalome!

Child Care Assistance Program Update

Through many hours and many meetings, the Child Care Eligibility Study Committee brainstormed ideas to improve the Child Care Assistance program. The Executive Director of the Department of Workforce Services has now approved the short-term recommendations that resulted from this study. We will be implementing some minor, but helpful, policy changes on

January 1, 2004. These changes are not going to significantly affect payment amounts, or what parents and providers need to do, but the changes should make it easier for the Eligibility Specialists and Employment Counselors to process the cases. We hope this is the beginning of a new and improved Child Care Assistance Program!

Do You Need To Be Setup to Receive Electronic Payments from the State?

Have you have recently become a Family Group, Licensed Center, or Nationally Accredited Center? Do you or will you provide care for families who receive state subsidy? If so, you need to be setup to receive electronic payments! If you do not have a Merchant ID number (the number that starts with a "B"), you need to contact the Provider Helpline at 1-866-375-5437 to get this process started. Also, if you have moved from one of these categories to another, you need

to get a new Merchant ID. For example, if your ID was created when your center was licensed exempt center, but it recently became licensed, you need to get a new Merchant ID number. If you have completed this process, and are able to receive benefits, you should be fine and don't need any changes. If you have problems receiving the benefits from the Utah Horizon card, please call the Provider Helpline at 1-866-375-5437.

From the Director of OCC

Dear Child Care Professional:

Last spring many of you responded to a survey sent out by the Office of Child Care about possible revisions to the Provider Achievement Award Program. We appreciate so much the valuable responses we received from providers. Based on your feedback, we have made changes to both our Professional Development and Quality Improvement programs.

Professional Development Programs. You will soon be receiving information in the mail about the new School Age Career Ladder Program as well as the Training & Longevity Supplement. The Training & Longevity Supplement will have some similarity to the previous Provider Achievement Award Program, in that it will offer providers in licensed child care programs an annual wage supplement based on your Career Ladder level and years of continuous licensed experience. However, an Environment Rating Scale Review will not be part of this program.

Quality Improvement Programs. Currently the Office of Child Care's biggest quality improvement program is the Quality Improvement Grant Program. By now many of you have had a chance to participate in this program and receive a grant. As you may know, the documenting of improvements made with these grant funds is accomplished using the Environment Rating Scales. Having a tool such as the Rating Scales to document quality improvements as a result of grant expenditures is an important part of our office's accountability to the federal Child Care Bureau.

Based on your feedback, it is our hope to eventually be able to also offer some kind of quality recognition awards (such as a star rating) to acknowledge providers' progress and accomplishments in providing quality care based on their Rating Scale scores.

It has been a short 15 months since the Environment Rating Scales were introduced and incorporated into the Quality Improvement Grant Program. In that time we have learned much about the process of training local CCR&R Technical Assistance Consultants to "reliability" in their use of the Rating Scales. This reliability is crucial in order to ensure that providers in all areas of the state have equal access to both grant monies and any future quality recognition awards. In order for this equality to exist, the Rating Scales must be applied consistently by TA Consultants in all areas of the state.

To date great strides have been made in the training and use of the Rating Scales, but we also believe we need more time to perfect this process before quality awards, bonuses, and ratings can be tied to their use. For this reason, *I have decided to postpone the implementation of quality recognition awards (called "Steps to the Stars" in the survey materials you were sent).* This will allow us to ensure that if and when such a program is implemented in Utah, there will be full equality and fairness in the program throughout the state.

Because the federal Child Care Development Fund Block Grant which funds all of the Office of Child Care programs, including our Quality Improvement Programs, is currently up for reauthorization in congress, I am not able at this time to give you a definite future implementation date. Please watch your Office of Child Care quarterly newsletter for future updates and information. In the meantime, I hope many of you will take advantage of the new Training and Longevity Supplement!

Sincerely,



Lynette Rassmussen

Office of Child Care

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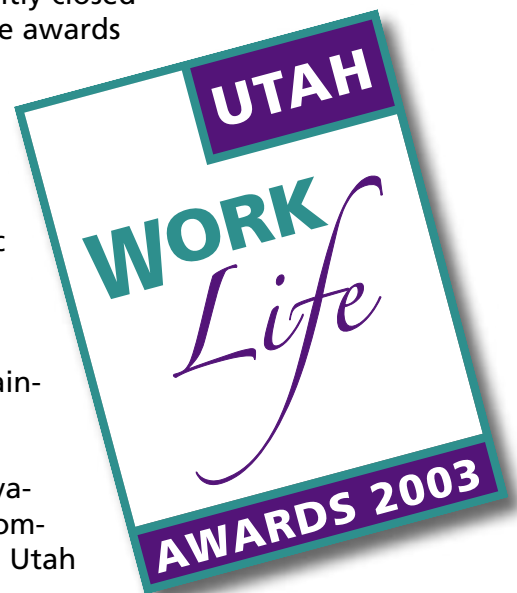
Congratulations to all Quality Improvement Grantees! and Congratulations to the Youth Connections Grantees!

Work/Life Awards

The Office of Child Care, in collaboration with the Department of Workforce Services and Juxtapose Work/Life Consultants recently closed the application process for 2003 Utah Work/Life Awards. These awards are given to companies from various industries, sizes and regions that demonstrate outstanding, innovative practices to successfully meet their work force and business needs.

The tangible benefits of successful work/life initiatives included improved: retention and recruitment, customer and public relations, employee morale, loyalty and productivity. Winning companies have also realized health care costs, absenteeism and turnover. Investing and addressing work/life needs is not just about doing right by employees- it is about creating sustainable, successful organizations.

The breadth of inclusiveness and creativity in workplace innovations this year was remarkable. Congratulations to all those companies that were nominated. For more information about the Utah Work/Life Awards, please contact the Office of Child Care.



Quality Improvement Grants and the Environment Rating Scales

Would you like to apply for a Quality Improvement (QI) Grant but are concerned about the observation process? If so, we want to make you aware of some changes we have made to make it an easier and more positive process for you.

The real purpose of the observation is to help you identify your strengths and become aware of areas that you could improve. This information allows you to use your grant money to increase your quality in specific area according to your individual needs. The use of the scales also allows OCC to document that the federal money used for this program really does improve the overall quality of child care.

Some misconceptions about the grant and scales process have discouraged some providers from participating. We would like to clarify those for you:

- You do not need to “get ready” for an observation.
- You do not need to change anything in your programs before you receive a grant, though many providers choose to do so.
- You do not need to take care of all of your health and safety problems first. In your grant application, you set goals to improve quality. Some goals should be related to any health or safety, but certainly not all goals. Children need more than just a safe and healthy environment. (Trampolines are the only exception. You do need to commit to making them inaccessible to the children in your grant application.)
- You do not need to have a minimum score. Your average score could be as low as a 1 when you apply.
- If you are participating with the Baby Steps Project, you are still eligible for a QI grant.
- You do not need to adopt every recommendation from the TA Consultant as a goal for your QI grant. You may pick and choose. You may also request recommendations for items you are interested in working on.

Some providers have felt overwhelmed and discouraged after receiving their recommendations. We have made some changes to make this process more positive. We will now:

- Place more emphasis on your strengths.
- Ask you what items you want to work on and when possible include those in your recommendations.
- Limit the number of recommendations you receive after your observation.
- Streamline the way in which recommendations are given, so it is less time consuming.
- Create more ways for you to get help in making improvements after your observation and after you receive your grant. These include follow-up phone calls, on-site visits, and support groups.

We would also like to challenge you to look at this process in ways that will make it more positive. It will help if you:

- View the observation as a learning opportunity, not a test.
- Recognize that what is most important is that you have chosen to participate in a quality improvement process that will take time. Reaching a score of 5 on the scales usually takes several years. However, your willingness to experience the discomfort of the observation will result in positive change in the lives of your children today.
- Know that most providers' initial average score on the scales is a 3, that the long range goal is an average score of 5, and that an average score of 7 is not realistic or necessary.
- Understand that all homes and centers have limitations in some areas that can't be fixed (location of bathrooms, size of rooms, etc.) and focus on the areas that you can improve.
- Understand that reaching a score of 7 on individual items allows you to compensate for building or playground problems.
- Remember that you can choose which items you want to work on each year.
- Remember to balance your goals between the health/safety, language, interaction and activity areas. Some items are more fun to work on than others. Be sure to choose some that will be fun!

If you are ready to begin the quality improvement grant process, contact the Technical Assistance Consultant at your local CCR&R. If you have participated in the past, you are eligible to reapply for a grant after one year.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Child Care at (801) 526-4340 or 1-800-622-7390 if you have any questions about the Quality Improvement Grants or the Environment Rating Scales.